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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

In-depth evaluation of the statistics programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme, dated 17 March 1997. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices; the Secretary-General takes note of the findings in the report and concurs with the recommendations made in it.

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ANNEX

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme

SUMMARY

The present report reviews the activities of the Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the Secretariat and the statistical divisions of the regional commissions, and includes descriptions of related activities in the Statistical Commission and regional intergovernmental bodies concerned with statistics, subsidiary bodies and expert groups reporting to them and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

The central focus of the report is on the needs of the primary users of the main outputs and services of the statistics programme and their utilization of those products. It was found that the identity of the users was clear, production decisions took their needs into account and feedback on utilization was regularly obtained for methodological work related to international recommendations; parliamentary services; on-line access to databases; customized services to users; and technical cooperation. In contrast, for print publications little reliable knowledge of the identity and needs of the primary users was available, or obtainable at reasonable cost. At present, the efforts and skill mix of the staff are heavily weighted in favour of the compilation and processing of statistics for use in publications.

A strategy to shift allocations over the four-year period of the medium-term plan to a focus on services determined by user needs and a knowledge of utilization patterns is proposed, consisting of 10 recommendations on user needs and the development of a United Nations economic and social information system (UNESIS) database; on-line access to United Nations statistical databases; tracking and responding to the needs of users; improvement in regional information systems; publications policy; evaluation of publications; an integrated presentation of international statistical activities; analytical services to departments; dissemination of innovations and lessons learned; and review of the present report and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on it.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1994, the Committee for Programme and Coordination scheduled an in-depth evaluation of the United Nations statistics programme for 1997.[1] The present report is submitted in response to that decision; it is based on (a) reports to and reviews by intergovernmental bodies; (b) internal studies; and (c) interviews with programme managers.

2. One of the considerations listed in the note by the Secretariat on topics for future in-depth evaluations (E/AC.51/1993/6, para. 8) was the need to examine a programme generally considered successful in order to learn lessons applicable to related programmes. The statistics programme was selected for evaluation with that criterion in mind.

3. The United Nations statistical programme consists of a central programme of five subprogrammes and five regional subprogrammes. The central programme is under the responsibility of the Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis. The Division cooperates with the Department for Development Support and Management Services in the execution of projects. The statistical activities of the regional commissions complement the objectives of the statistics programme as a whole. The subprogrammes of the five commissions also include provisions for training and the promotion of modern information technology. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the resources devoted to the statistics programme during the period 1996-1997.

4. Since its inception 50 years ago, the overall goal of the statistics programme has been to increase the availability and use of relevant, timely and reliable statistics, for national and international planning and action.[2]

5. The statistical units in the organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, including the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and World Tourism Organization (WTO), cooperate with the Statistics Division in the compilation of international statistics and provide leadership in their fields of expertise both in the compilation of statistical databases and in methodological work, as described in chapter III.

Table 1. Resources of the statistics programme, 1996-1997

Organizational unit	Established posts		Resources for 1996-1997	
			Regular budget[a]	Extrabudgetary (estimate)[b]
	Professional	General Service	(Thousands of United States dollars)	
Statistics Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis	67	66	21 978.6	2 607.5
Regional commissions	51	70	19 716.1	6 273.1
ECA	11	12	3 368.1	3 403.6
ECE	16	17	7 580.8	9 660.8[c]
ECLAC	11	18	4 405.6	220.7
ESCAP	8	15	2 517.6	1 476.0
ESCWA	5	8	1 844.0[d]	206.0[d]
Total	118	136	41 694.7	8 880.6

[a] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1 and Add.1).

[b] Ibid. (A/50/6/Rev.1).

[c] Provided by ECE.

[d] ESCWA has recently restructured its activities into four thematic subprogrammes. Resources for statistics are therefore dispersed in the new subprogrammes. The resources shown are those for 1994-1995.

II. INTERGOVERNMENTAL OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION

A. Statistical Commission

6. The Statistical Commission, and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, acts as the oversight body for the central programme. The Commission meets biannually for five days. The Working Group meets in the years following the sessions of the Commission, reviews the agenda and documentation of the Commission and considers proposals prior to their submission to it. The meetings of the Working Group also provide substantive guidelines and authoritative decisions that help refine the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Commission.

7. Many of the participants of the Working Group and the members of the Statistical Commission itself are drawn from national statistical offices. The programme also makes use of ad hoc expert groups with many participants also drawn from national statistical offices and other groups of specialists. In

1994 and 1995 virtually all of the heads of delegations to the Commission were heads or deputy heads of the statistical offices of their respective Governments. With such representation, the work of the Commission can be conducted with a technical appreciation of diverse national practices and this permits it to make authoritative recommendations on statistical standards that are accepted as feasible and useful to those who will have to implement them.

8. In 1993, the Statistical Commission recommended[3] that the regional commissions establish or reinforce conferences of national chief statisticians and that those regional bodies work together closely as the focus of regional statistical development and technical cooperation. The Commission also requested the Statistics Division to invite chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the sessions of the Commission and of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination.

B. Regional review bodies

9. Each regional commission has a subsidiary statistical committee that reviews the statistical activities of the Commission's secretariat and provides guidance to the statistical activities of the Commission. The terms of reference of the statistical committees reflect their respective intergovernmental setting and conference structure. Heads and officials of national statistical offices participate in the statistical committees of the regional commissions.

10. In the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Conference of European Statisticians, with oversight and review responsibilities, includes all of the national statistical offices of the ECE member countries. In 1991, the Conference amended its structure and objectives in order to strengthen its oversight and the coordination of international statistical activities of ECE, OECD and the European Communities (EUROSTAT).[4] The 15 member countries of the European Communities are also members of ECE and OECD. The OECD countries not members of ECE participate in the meetings of the Conference of European Statisticians. The Conference thus serves as the coordinator of international statistical activities in the region.

11. In the region of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, Demographers and Information Scientists has oversight and reviewing responsibilities; this forum includes officials responsible for the use of statistics, their collection and dissemination.

12. In the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Commission at its session in 1995 recommended the establishment of the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific as a subsidiary organ of the Statistical Committee. At its ninth session,[5] the ESCAP Committee on Statistics decided that members of the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics would serve as representatives of their national statistical offices rather than in their personal capacities.

13. In the region of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Directors of Statistics of the Americas meet in biannual meetings in which they review the ECLAC work programme in statistics.

14. In the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), a statistical committee of ESCWA was established and met for the first time in 1995; the committee's meetings have replaced those of the heads of national statistical officials.

C. The Administrative Committee on Coordination system and its procedures

15. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, comprising all organizations of the United Nations system and world trade organizations, promotes coordination and integration of the statistical programmes of the international organizations and coordinates follow-up of statistical issues in intergovernmental meetings such as those of the Statistical Commission. The secretariats of the regional intergovernmental bodies and other specialized organizations, such as the statistical offices of the European Communities, OECD, the Customs Cooperation Council (also known as the World Customs Organization) and WTO, also participate in the work of the Subcommittee. The Statistics Division is a standing member of the Bureau of the ACC Subcommittee. Reports of the Subcommittee are transmitted to the Statistical Commission under cover of a note by the Secretary-General.

16. The work of the Subcommittee is complemented in substantive areas by eight task forces, on environmental statistics; finance statistics; service statistics; national accounts; industrial and construction statistics; price statistics, including the International Comparison Programme; measurement of poverty; and international trade statistics.[6] The mandates and work programmes of the task forces are established under the guidance of the Statistical Commission and are viewed by the ACC Subcommittee and the Commission as important instruments of coordination. The task forces on price statistics and on the industrial construction statistics have completed their work and are therefore being discontinued.

17. The composition of the task forces reflects the interests, resources and distinct mandates of the member organizations. The Statistics Division serves as the secretariat of the Inter-agency Working Group on National Accounts and convener of the task force on the environment. It is also a member of the other six groups. Because of financial constraints, the regional commissions participate selectively in the activities of the task forces. In 1996, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination decided[7] that, for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission, in 1997, an overall assessment should be carried out of the task force system. The assessment recommends the discontinuation of the task forces on poverty and international price statistics.

D. Integrated presentations

18. The Statistical Division of ECE prepares at the beginning of each year, for review by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, a draft integrated presentation of the activities of all international organizations active in the ECE region: the Statistical Division of ECE and those of OECD, EUROSTAT, the Inter-state Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, WTO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Statistics Division of the Secretariat.[8] The draft is updated and amended to include recommendations of the Bureau and then resubmitted to the annual sessions of the Conference. The integrated presentation summarizes the objectives and expected outputs that have been specified and agreed by member States for all relevant statistical work to be carried out by all the international organizations active in the region. The Conference approves parts of the integrated presentation that fall within the purview of the Statistics Division of ECE. It also offers suggestions and advice on planned future work in the parts of the integrated presentation that are the responsibility of other international organizations.[8] In domains where several international organizations are working actively, the Conference of European Statisticians asks one agency to serve as rapporteur of the Conference and to submit reports to the Bureau containing in-depth reviews. The Bureau makes detailed recommendations to the annual plenary sessions of the Conference. The aim of the integrated presentation is to ensure that statistical activities in the ECE region are focused on the needs of the member States and are as effective and efficient as possible. In that way, all areas of statistical activities are reviewed in depth once every two years and decisions are taken on all of them every year.

19. The ESCAP has adopted the integrated presentation of its statistical activities together with those of the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific on an experimental basis.[9]

20. The adoption of an integrated presentation was discussed by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.[10] The Administrative Committee expressed qualified support for an integrated presentation of work programmes along the lines of the approach being used in the ECE region and requested the Statistics Division and IMF to investigate and report to its Subcommittee on Statistical Activities in September 1997 on the feasibility of a modified integrated presentation. The report is in preparation.

21. The Statistical Division of ECLAC prepares an integrated work programme for international and regional cooperation that is discussed and approved every two years at the biennial Meetings of Directors of Statistics of the Americas. It covers four areas: national accounts, social statistics, dissemination of information and the environment. The responsibility for the activities it contains is assigned to an institution or to a country. The monitoring of the work is undertaken at least once a year by an oversight committee.

III. MAJOR CATEGORIES OF OUTPUTS AND SERVICES: USERS AND UTILIZATION

A. Users and utilization

22. There are four main types of statistical activity and output: (a) methodological studies and the convening of ad hoc expert group meetings with a view to the formulation of international recommendations and guidelines for data collection; (b) parliamentary services to intergovernmental bodies, consisting of reports and substantive servicing of intergovernmental meetings; (c) compilation of international statistics into databases and the dissemination of the data in them through statistical publications, on-line access and customized data services; and (d) support to technical cooperation projects.

23. The identity and needs of the primary users and the extent of utilization of outputs and services, described in detail in the present chapter and presented in tabular form in the appendix, can be summarized as follows:

(a) In the case of global methodological recommendations, representatives of Governments, who are the primary users, participate in the formulation of recommendations through expert group meetings and deliberations leading to the adoption and subsequent revisions of recommendations. Information on the utilization of recommended international standards and methods can be inferred from national reporting practices. Formal inquiries on utilization of international recommendations by national statistical offices are also undertaken;

(b) The primary users of parliamentary services are Member States, to whom services are provided upon request;

(c) The users of on-line databases are known through registration procedures. In addition, there is a diverse group of known users who receive customized data services. In contrast, although the institutional recipients of publications are known - most are libraries - there is very little information on the identities and needs of the primary users of publications within the recipient institutions or of purchasers of individual copies;

(d) Technical cooperation projects are conducted at the request of Governments so the identity of the primary users is known; evaluations are conducted under donor procedures that yield some knowledge of utilization and impact.

B. International methodological recommendations

1. Process and current status

24. The process of developing agreement on international recommendations and statistical methodologies involves elaborate inter-agency coordination procedures and technical review and policy guidance by the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination. Preliminary statements of concepts and methods are discussed in

inter-agency task forces or distributed in draft form for comment to individuals selected for their professional expertise and practical experience in different operational settings. The revised drafts are reviewed by national experts, mostly from national statistical offices, in meetings convened for the purpose, and then further reviewed at meetings of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination before consideration by the Statistical Commission.

25. Recommendations consist of a basic set of common concepts, definitions and classifications to be used by national statistical offices in their respective statistical data-collection activities and more elaborate elements that Governments could use or adapt to their needs. Handbooks are issued as a supplementary follow-up to global and regional methodological recommendations. At the international level, classification systems are also adopted as the basis for statistical aggregation. Additionally, correspondence tables among different classification systems are developed and maintained. Revision and updating of recommendations follow the same procedures of consultation and review as for the formulation of the initial recommendation and are also endorsed by the Statistical Commission.

26. In economic statistics, as of the end of 1996, recommendations had been issued on, inter alia, the System of National Accounts (SNA), International Standard Industrial Classifications (ISIC), Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and Central Product Classification (CPC). The Statistics Division provides a hotline to respond to inquiries by producers of statistics in order to coordinate implementation of classification systems. The Division also coordinates revisions of those systems and the maintenance of correspondence tables to convert from one reference classification to another and between revisions of the same classifications. The Division maintains an inventory of all other reference classifications in the United Nations system.

27. In other areas of economic statistics, the Division has primary responsibility for compilation of international statistics on energy and construction; in those areas the Division also maintains methodologies. In still other areas of economic statistics, the Division collaborates in methodological activities through participation in the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

28. In some new or critical areas of economic statistics, such as the development of environmental indicators and international classifications for the services sector, the Division plays both the lead substantive role and the coordinating role. Where the Division does not have adequate expertise or resources, it cooperates with national statistical offices with the requisite resources to form informal groups of country experts. The Division advises and participates in such informal methodological networks, disseminates the results of the study groups to all national statistical offices and arranges for the submission of their recommendations to the Statistical Commission.

29. In the field of demographic, social and migration statistics, the Statistics Division is revising and updating the principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses and, in cooperation with the Population Division, is revising recommendations on international migration statistics.

Officials of national offices responsible for census operations participate in the revision of the recommendations. Recommendations for the year 2000 round of censuses include global recommendations for tabulations of aggregated data which will ensure the availability of internationally comparable data appropriate for gender and social analysis.[11] ECA, with financial support from the Government of Canada through UNFPA, held a regional working group in January 1996, which adopted recommendations for the African region. ECE is preparing recommendations for the census round of the year 2000. The other regional commissions have not yet revised the regional census recommendations for the current census round, largely as a result of declining resources. The loss has been mitigated by the participation of experts from developing regions in the global expert group meeting.[12]

2. Monitoring and assessing implementation of recommendations

(a) Guidelines by the Statistical Commission

30. The Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination issued guidelines for the assessment of international recommendations at its sessions in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

31. In 1993, the Commission requested the Statistics Division, in cooperation with the secretariat units of the regional commissions, to set up a system for monitoring adherence to adopted United Nations classifications in the member countries.[13] The Commission also requested that the monitoring system provide essential feedback to agencies that would be relevant to the provision of technical cooperation and to future revision of standards.[14] At its special session in 1994, the Commission reviewed the coordination of international methodological activities in different fields of statistics on the basis of the reports of the inter-agency task forces. The Commission continued its review and monitoring of progress in those areas at its twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth regular sessions, in 1995 and 1997, respectively.

(b) Assessments of the utilization of international recommendations at the national level

32. International recommendations are assessed through formal inquiries into the compliance of national reporting practices, evaluation of national data provided by member countries and feedback from country experts participating in revisions of international recommendations.

33. The extent of use of the international principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses[15] was assessed in reviews of national census practices during the periods 1965-1974 and 1975-1984. Compliance rates for each of the dozens of component recommendations and options are known from responses to questionnaires. In addition to responses from questionnaires, the Statistics Division obtains information by reviewing national census materials describing census operations and methods.

34. In 1995 the Division surveyed national reporting practices concerning the international merchandise trade and their compliance with the United Nations

guidelines as set out in International Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions.[16] Responses were received from 142 countries. The survey included 156 items on data-collection practices for the 64 items for which international guidelines exist. The revision and updating of recommendations provide another opportunity for national experts attending expert group meetings convened for the purpose to participate in technical evaluation of the recommendations and to provide feedback on their utilization.

35. At the request of the Commission, the Division has continued to review the implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993.[17] In 1996, a first inquiry on the status of implementation on the basis of information provided by Member States to the regional commissions was completed. The inquiry surveyed country plans for implementing the SNA accounts and assessed the services and areas of assistance needed for a successful implementation. This assessment by the Statistics Division has been sent to the regional commissions for validation, which, when completed, will help identify global, regional and interregional strategies for technical cooperation in support of improved capabilities for the collection of statistics on national accounts.

C. Parliamentary services

1. Services to intergovernmental statistical bodies

36. Parliamentary services in the form of reports and substantive servicing of meetings are provided to the Statistical Commission. The reports include reports on substantive statistical subject-matters and notes by the Secretary-General and reports of task forces and expert groups established by the Commission. The statistical units of the regional commissions perform similar parliamentary services for the statistical committees of their commissions.

2. Services to other international deliberations

37. The Statistics Division regularly services the Committee on Contributions by providing the Committee annually with a database of relevant macroeconomic aggregates, including national income, national debt stock and debt payments,[18] for all 185 Member States and for at least the past 10 years.[19] The Division complements the official data reported to it by national statistical agencies with data estimates of the Statistics Division for those countries and those years which are missing in the official database, converts all data material from national currencies into United States dollar estimates and assists the Committee on methodological problems such as income concepts and currency conversion rates.[20] The Division has developed special price-adjusted rates of exchange for the Committee. In addition, the Division provides ad hoc substantive advisory services to the High-level Open-Ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

38. The statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences on social issues, described in paragraphs 50 to 54 below, is another new area of services to intergovernmental bodies.

D. Data processing

1. Information technology and data management

39. The Statistics Division maintains most of its data files at the New York Computing Centre. The data are compiled through questionnaires to Governments or from published official sources and magnetic tapes and diskettes. In addition to those data files, the Division receives data files containing international finance statistics from IMF, civil aviation statistics from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), international agricultural trade statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and world debt tables from the World Bank. Those data files are held in the New York mainframe computer and are updated using a variety of "legacy" mainframe programs dating as far back as the early 1960s. The United Nations Statistical Information System (UNSIS), developed in the 1970s, is now used mainly to retrieve and publish the data in photocomposed tables for United Nations recurrent publications.

40. The major applications in data processing and tabulation were developed 15 years ago on the mainframe computer. They are ageing, fragile and difficult to maintain. Many of the staff use personal computers to perform production tasks. The result is a mix of cohesive but clumsy legacy systems on a mainframe and many applications on personal computers, but with few links between them. A more consistent framework is needed with a client/server architecture that can continue to take advantage of the flexibility and efficiency of personal computer software and federate the personal computers around a database through which they can share data and make them available to external users.

41. As the lead unit for economic and social information within the Secretariat, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis has, in cooperation with the regional commissions, started to develop an economic and social information system (UNESIS) that encompasses data collection, processing, storage, exchange and dissemination to users.[21] The establishment of UNESIS is the focus of many of the current efforts to update and modernize international statistical activities.

42. A task force established in the context of the efficiency review examined plans for UNESIS and concluded that it would become the main area and common ground for future database work and development in the Department and its Statistics Division and would require a thorough review of all existing data structures and future requirements of the Division. The task force recommended that the structure of the proposed core databases be reviewed by all branches before adoption as UNESIS standards.

43. The development of UNESIS requires reconfiguration of the work flow, new staff with different skills, the acquisition of the technology and retraining of old and new staff.

44. Efficiency reviews in the regional commissions examined the issues of improving and updating their information technologies and use of the Internet as a means of providing access to their databases. Approaches differ, however. The ECE Conference of European Statisticians stresses the organizational implications of the information technologies for national statistical offices. ECLAC and ECA have undertaken information technology efficiency projects to improve the management of publications, including streamlining them, updating mailing lists and overall rationalization of distribution. ESCWA has started distributing its labour force statistics on diskettes and is exploring resources for establishing an information centre the national statistical offices in the region can access.[22]

2. On-line services

45. Technological changes in data processing and dissemination have made possible, and so created the demand for, access to statistical databases. The databases of the Statistical Yearbook, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Women's Indicators and Statistics Microcomputer Database are available in machine-readable forms such as CD-ROM.

46. The Division also maintains the database of commodity trade, COMTRADE, at the International Computing Centre at Geneva. It is updated weekly. United Nations organizations, other international organizations and permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva have access to COMTRADE in Geneva. Permanent missions in New York and the regional commissions have access to COMTRADE through the New York Computing Centre.

47. The database of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics has been made available, on an experimental basis, in a website accessible worldwide through the Internet. The website also contains information on the publications available in machine-readable form and other information on sources and availability of international statistical data. During a six-month experimental period (May-October 1996), 2,291 users from 81 countries registered at the website of the Bulletin (see table 2). This compares with two ad hoc requests for customized extracts of the database during 1994 and four each during 1995 and 1996.

48. The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics website facilitated a geographically wide dissemination of information and showed a level of interest that suggests significant potential global demand for on-line data. No comparable information is available on the users of publications. Ad hoc requests for customized data from the trade database run around 95 per cent from North America, 4 per cent from Europe and only 1 per cent from the rest of the world, compared with 20 per cent for the on-line experiment. The high-technology method of dissemination, then, would appear to be potentially an equitable method, and perhaps in the near future, or even today, the most equitable method.

Table 2. Characteristics of users of the on-line Monthly Bulletin of Statistics

Geographical region	Number of countries	Number of inquiries	Type of users	Percentage of inquiries
North America	2	1 389	Commercial firm	26
Europe	33	447	Government	8
Asia	17	287	Non-governmental or non-profit-making organizations	11
Latin America and the Caribbean	22	146	Media	2
Africa	7	22	Student	27
	81	2 291	Public or university library	10
			Other	17
				100

Source: Statistics Division.

E. Customized services to users

1. Customized extracts from databases

49. The Statistics Division has traditionally serviced ad hoc requests for customized information from private commercial users and researchers and government agencies. The proceeds from these customized services (some $400,000 per annum) and the ad hoc sales of machine-readable products such as copies of files on diskette and magnetic tape are credited to the statistical revenue account to defray the cost of providing the services. In addition, United Nations Publications provides support on an ad hoc project-by-project basis from publication sales revenue to develop new electronic products such as CD-ROMs and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics on-line service on the Internet. Of all ad hoc income-generating requests (300-400 per annum), 75 per cent, which also generate more than 95 per cent of the income, are for trade statistics. Some additional income is also generated to the United Nations Publications sales revenue account through contractual licences providing royalty income for rights to reproduce material from United Nations statistical publications. There is also a large number of ad hoc requests for information, dealt with by all branches of the Division by phone, facsimile and letter, where limited information is provided at no charge.

2. Follow-up to recent major United Nations conferences

50. In recent years, major United Nations conferences have given new emphasis and priority to the availability of internationally comparable socio-economic statistics for use in analytical assessment. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development generated a new demand for the development and

standardization of the concepts and methods of integrated environmental and economic accounting and indicators of sustainable development. Agenda 21 calls for the development and implementation of those concepts in order to provide the information necessary to formulate policies and strategies for sustainable development at the national and international levels. In addition, there is a need to improve the international community's ability to measure the environmental impact of human activity and expenditures related to the environment. The Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development have established a joint task force to develop environmental indicators for use in monitoring progress in achieving the objectives of sustainable development.

51. In social statistics, the action programmes of the Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women resulted in requests for the development of social indicators to monitor trends in areas of social concern.

52. An expert group of the Statistical Commission has reviewed the statistical implications of the recent conferences[23] and proposed that each country compile a minimum national social data set, and a list of indicators of direct relevance to the five policy themes of broad social concern derived from the programmes of action of the recent conference.[24] The Expert Group also proposed that the Statistics Division draft a model questionnaire for use by the regional commissions to collate responses from their respective member countries, to identify what capacities and data are available and to assess the needs of member countries in order to strengthen national capacity for the production, analysis and dissemination of the minimum national social data.[25] The Expert Group recommended discontinuation of the Task Force on the measurement of poverty, which also concluded that it was not equipped to establish poverty measurement standards.[26]

53. The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination reviewed the proposals of the Expert Group and agreed with the conclusion of the Task Force on poverty that it was not the function of the Statistical Commission to develop international standards for the definition of poverty, but recommended to the Commission the formation of an expert group on poverty statistics, comprising country experts and appropriate experts from international bodies as proposed by the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences.[27] Brazil will act as chairman of the Expert Group and ECLAC will act as its Secretariat. There is broad agreement on the need for the active involvement of expert groups from among national statistical offices in the elaboration of definitions and measurement standards on complex social phenomena and in the elaboration of classification systems for critical economic issues and the environment. The Statistics Division envisages the active involvement of country experts, not only as a practical necessity but also as an opportunity for facilitating exchange of information on experiences and research among countries. The Working Group also agreed with the proposal of the Expert Group on Social Statistics to hold a seminar on poverty statistics at ECLAC and welcomed the latter's offer to act as secretariat of the seminar and to host it in 1997. ECLAC will count on the cooperation of the other regional commissions in the

preparation of the seminar. The seminar on poverty statistics and the first meeting of the Expert Group on Poverty Statistics will be held at Santiago in May 1997.

54. The Division has incorporated the statistical implications of some of the policy themes, notably population and development and status of women, in the revisions of international recommendations on population and housing census and guidelines and manuals for data collection. As part of the support to the deliberations and follow-up to the International Population and Development Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Division has, with financial support from the UNFPA and UNDP, compiled a women's statistical database that is published on CD-ROM and was used as a basis for the publication The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics. The Division has also started compiling from the statistical information available in its databases an analytical database for the preliminary minimum list of social indicators. The Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination requested the Division to work with the regional commissions to arrange for pilot studies in each region on the availability and quality of statistics called for in the minimum national social data set and to submit a report synthesizing the regional results and identifying reporting mechanisms and approaches that might be useful in all regions.[28]

3. Customized services in a regional policy framework

55. The secretariat of the ECLAC reviewed the information needs of policy makers in the region as a framework for promoting user access to ECLAC outputs and services. Three considerations were used as guidelines for anticipating the needs of users. These were improvements in the economy of the region; broad adoption of reforms of varying intensities; collaboration with countries and international and regional organizations.

56. In view of improvements in the economies of the region, the Statistics Division of ECLAC anticipated a strong demand for information to help monitor and design national policies for eliminating poverty. To meet that anticipated need, the Division compiled analytical data from household surveys and updated its social data banks from a variety of other sources. This resulted in sharp reduction in the time lag in social statistics and in increased and timely availability of relevant socio-economic data used to produce the 1995 Social Panorama of Latin America.

57. In its review of the information needs of users, ECLAC also anticipated an increased demand for short-term economic indicators that countries would need to monitor the achievement of policy reform goals. For that purpose, a database of short-term economic indicators (BADECOY) for eight countries has been created and is being maintained. The database is the joint responsibility of ECLAC and the relevant national offices. The ECLAC plans to expand the coverage of the BADECOY database to all countries of the region. The database is currently distributed through diskettes and quarterly bulletins that provide comparative presentations of major indicators for the eight participating countries and selected indicators for the international economy. ECLAC has also launched a joint effort with the Ministry of Planning of Chile to assist publication of the

results of Chile's National socio-economic surveys, which the Government of Chile has been conducting since 1985. The Division is also working closely with the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Sciences of Mexico on the joint preparation of poverty estimates, which are disseminated in annual workshops for countries of the region; this effort is being expanded in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

58. A Working Group on Strategic Directions and Priorities of ECE missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva has prepared a draft plan of action[29] for the Commission's adoption at its fifty-second session, in April 1997. In statistics, the plan envisages the consolidation of three types of services: first, services to the national statistical offices in the ECE region through the implementation of the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians; second, collection of essential macroeconomic and other statistics on the ECE region for use in the Economic Survey of Europe and dissemination to member States, academic circles and the private business sector; and third, services that will address the particular circumstances of countries with economies in transition in the field of statistics through regional advisory services and technical assistance activities.

F. Publications

1. Periodicity and types

Recurrent publications

59. The current focus of the statistics programme is largely on the compilation of statistical data for use in recurrent statistical publications. During 1994-1995, 17 issues of recurrent publications, 8 annual and one biannual, were published (averaging 1,000 pages each), together with 8 issues of one quarterly publication (20 pages per issue), and 24 issues of one monthly publication (320 pages per issue) - an average of about 20 volumes and 4 small publications per annum - plus 3 CD-ROMs and one diskette.

Non-recurrent publications

60. Non-recurrent publications are used to disseminate methodological studies and surveys of best national practices for the use of government and professional statisticians. Non-recurrent publications include compendiums of statistics and preliminary methodological guidelines for data collection, which are produced to meet the needs of the general public and the international research community or to coincide with special events.

Analytical publications

61. The preparation of The World's Women: Trends and Statistics (1993, 1995) was the result of a significant level of sustained collaboration with users whose needs determined the presentation and choice of compilations of statistics. This required intense interaction with users to help them articulate their needs in terms of operational statistical concepts. The Social Panorama of Latin America, produced by ECLAC, covers approximately 20 different topics, each section consisting of an abstract, setting out the main

conclusions, followed by a short discussion and statistical tables and graphics. UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) both contributed to the publication. Because of the modest resources available to the different subprogrammes, ECLAC combines some of its resources for data collection with those for analytical studies; the Social Development Division collaborated with the Statistics and Economic Projections Division in the production of the Social Panorama of Latin America. A review of ECE statistical publications found that those which feature textual analysis were more popular than others and there was more demand for analysis.

62. In some cases, specialized statistical publications with low sales are produced as machine-readable products: tapes, diskettes and microfiche. These electronic publications include historical series and additional information, beyond those in the corresponding print publications. The Division has started maintenance of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics on an Internet webpage and has added free on-line access to subscribers to the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics publications. These electronic versions of statistical publications permit users to produce customized tables without the tedious task of re-inputting the data.

63. The statistics compiled by the regional commissions are used for the production of regional yearbooks and periodic compendiums of economic and social statistics and analytical economic and social surveys and studies. ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP also produce recurrent publications on foreign trade. ESCWA also publishes periodic publications on national accounts, while ESCAP includes such statistics in its regular statistical series. The Statistical Division of ECE compiles data on a range of economic and social statistics, many of which are for inclusion in the Economic Survey of Europe and the Economic Bulletin for Europe, which are published by the Division for Economic Analysis and Projections of ECE. Many other statistics are included in the ECE yearbook, Trends in Europe and North America. Other divisions of the ECE also compile and publish statistics on forestry, chemicals, transport, foreign and direct investment and other domains. ECE statistical publications have been reviewed in depth, resulting in a reduction in the number of publications and the inclusion of analytical text in many that remain.

64. The five regional commissions and the Statistics Division collectively produced 166 publications, including 118 recurrent statistical publications, during 1994-1995.

2. Distribution and sales

65. Both recurrent and non-recurrent statistical publications of the Statistics Division are distributed, free of charge, to permanent missions, foreign ministries and other official recipients on mailing lists maintained by the Office of Conference Services of the Secretariat and to national and international statistical offices and United Nations agencies and others who assist the Division in data collection or analysis, on mailing lists maintained by the Division. Total print runs of publications are determined by the Publication Board through consultations with the Department by the Sales and Marketing Section, Department of Public Information, on likely sales and

requirements for official distribution. The publications are also deposited with 71 United Nations information centres and 342 national depository libraries in 147 countries.[30] The depository libraries receive publications either free or on payment of a nominal contribution. The statistical publications are also sold by subscription and at United Nations book stores and authorized bookshops. Table 3 summarizes distribution, average print runs and free and sales distribution of the recurrent, non-recurrent and analytical publications issued in 1995. The figures are typical of the pattern in recent years.

66. The sales of 11 of the 18 publications were less than 1,500 copies per issue. One is being discontinued. Only five publications had sales of over 3,000 copies. Two of those publications were issued to coincide with special events: the adoption of the 1993 System of National Accounts and the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The relatively high sales of these two publications - 7,156 and 9,203 copies respectively - suggest the importance of planning the timing of publication to coincide with major events. Perhaps the Division should plan more of its non-recurrent publications around relevant major events.

Table 3. Average free distribution and sales of statistical publications of the Statistics Division issued in 1995 (average per publication)

	Print run (all languages)	Free distribution		Sales as of November 1996
		Official list	Department list	
Recurrent				
Eight yearbooks	4 187	1 275	629	2 068
Monthly Bulletin of Statistics[a]	4 800	757	325	1 625
Population and Vital Statistics (quarterly)[a]	4 800	757	325	436
Two compendiums	3 310	1 405	1 450	294
Non-recurrent				
Four methodological studies	6 467	2 248	1 875	557
1993 System of National Accounts	16 430	1 930	3 450	7 156
Analytical[b]	56 902	9 143	4 832	9 023

Source: Documents Control Section, Office of Conference and Support Services, and Sales and Marketing Section, Department of Public Information.

[a] Subscription sales only.

[b] One publication (The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics).

67. The United Nations does realize modest revenues from sales publications but it does not analyse income from each publication or the costs of production. Even in the absence of any analysis of profitability, it is clear from the print runs and sales figures in the table above that very few of the publications have commercial significance. The United Nations has, however, a strong non-commercial interest in the continued publication of some basic reference documents.

68. Information on the actual sales and departmental and official distribution is maintained separately by three organizational units: the Marketing and Sales Section, Department of Public Information, the Documents Control Section, Office of Conference and Support Services, Department of Administration and Management, and the Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis. No unit is responsible for putting together the full picture on actual distribution and sales and so this is not done. Management cannot, therefore, periodically review distribution and sales figures for its publications. The Marketing and Sales Section should compile periodic reports on the distribution and sales of the publications and the profiles of users.

3. Assessment of content, coverage and quality

69. In February 1993, the Statistics Division convened a meeting of an expert group of 10 statistical experts and officials from seven United Nations agencies to assess the content and coverage of the United Nations Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. In their review, the expert group noted that there was unnecessary detail in both the Yearbook and the Bulletin: there were 140 tables for over 200 countries or areas in the world in the thirty-seventh edition (1993) of the Yearbook. The fortieth edition (1995) of the Yearbook has been significantly scaled back to 83 tables. Virtually all of the recommendations by the expert group on organization, presentation and subject coverage have been implemented.

70. In its decision O (45) of 14 December 1990, ECE requested the Conference of European Statisticians to evaluate periodically the utility and impact of ECE statistical publications. The Conference concluded that ECE statistical publications should be evaluated at several levels: (a) criteria had to be developed to establish whether particular data ought to be disseminated or not; (b) when developing a data dissemination or publication policy, all technically available options should be taken into account; (c) it needed to be decided in which form the dissemination of particular data should occur; (d) the findings from the first three levels should be applied to the existing publications programme; (e) a mechanism should be put in place that permitted monitoring of the relevant aspects of the dissemination and publication policy of ECE.[11] Regarding the criteria to be applied when deciding on dissemination, the Conference noted that the need for the data had to be established, and the potential or actual use of the data had to be demonstrated. The actual use of printed publications should therefore be surveyed in a systematic manner.[12]

71. The working group established by the Conference to review ECE statistical publications concluded that the extent of the use of international statistics

was fairly small in most instances and that statistical publications that featured textual analysis were more popular than others and there was more demand for analysis. The Conference proposed wider use of surveys of ECE publications, joint use of international databases between international institutions and preparation of joint international publications.[33] At the request of the Conference and in view of the above guidelines, the secretariat of ECE conducted a detailed intra-secretariat review of all statistical publications of the Commission, including those issued by the substantive divisions. As a result, seven publications have been discontinued and another three are to be discontinued. Many of the remaining publications are being overhauled by eliminating or consolidating tables and introducing analytical texts.[34]

4. Assessment of user awareness and needs

72. There is very little available information on the identity and needs of users, or the actual use, of United Nations statistical publications by any of the intended users, including Governments. The officials of the Statistics Division still glean information on users and their needs, and the relevance and uses of the publications, from ad hoc professional contacts with some of the actual users, or through public inquiries. This is so in spite of considerable effort over the last 15 years to obtain a more systematic knowledge of the needs and scope of potential users, as described in the paragraphs that follow.

73. In its decision 1981/180 of 23 July 1981, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination that the Statistical Commission review and evaluate the general policy of publications of statistics that are more than three years old. In response, the Statistical Commission, at its twenty-second session, in 1983, reviewed and endorsed the publication activities of the Statistics Division and requested the Division to conduct periodic reviews of the recurrent statistical publications and ways of enhancing user awareness and targeting statistical publications to the needs of users.[35]

74. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 38/32 E of 25 November 1983 on control and limitation of documentation, the General Assembly established a set of criteria to guide intergovernmental review of recurrent publications. These criteria were: (a) usefulness to the end-user of the publications as gauged from end-user response or from the sales record of a publication; (b) filling of a need; (c) high standard of analysis or data; (d) promotion of the principles and purposes of the Organization; and (e) continued validity of the original mandate. In part III of its resolution 38/227 A of 20 December 1983, the Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination that called for better definition and clearer identification of target users of recurrent publications.

75. In 1984, the Division prepared two reports, entitled "Broad Aspects of the Publication Policies of the Statistical Agencies",[36] and "Meeting User Needs for, and Improving the Dissemination of International Statistics".[37]

76. At its twenty-fifth session, in 1989, the Statistical Commission again requested a report surveying national experiences in improving uses and

dissemination of national statistical publications. The report, submitted to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session,[38] summarized elements of strategies for improving user awareness consisting of outreach and contacts with users, product improvement and dissemination strategies.

77. The expert group referred to in paragraph 69 above reviewed a summary of returns of a user survey that had been inserted in the thirty-seventh edition of the Statistical Yearbook; 185 of 8,000 questionnaires were returned. The participants agreed that such a low response rate could give very little indication on which to base meaningful conclusions. The experts suggested that better procedure, such as selecting a sample of users and conducting phone interviews, could provide valid indications of users' and clients' preferences.

78. The Division engaged the services of a consultant during 1995 to review user needs, and their implications for the implementation of UNESIS, for five publications: the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, National Accounts Statistics, the Demographic Yearbook, the International Trade Statistics Yearbook and the Statistical Yearbook. The consultant's report identified issues of interest and concern to current users for each of the five publications. These were similar to those identified by the expert group convened in February 1993. In addition, the consultant's report noted that machine-readable products were not easy to use except for sophisticated users, who would prefer on-line access. Most current users prefer print form. The phase-in to electronic retrieval from paper envisaged in UNESIS would require further research and the consultant recommended that the Statistics Division establish a producer/user committee to review capabilities versus need.

G. Technical cooperation

79. The Statistics Division provides substantive support and advisory services for statistical projects funded from extrabudgetary sources for which the Department for Development Support and Management Services is also the implementing agency. Under the regular programme for technical cooperation, the Division also provides advisory services in statistics and data processing and informatics to Governments. The Division collaborates with the Department in the execution of all statistical projects and with the Population Division in population-related projects. In both types of statistical projects, the Department maintains financial and budgetary controls, procures equipment and recruits experts and is otherwise accountable for project management to the funding organization. The Statistics Division in turn assigns a programme officer and a substantive officer in the Division to each project. The UNFPA-funded technical support services staff, which includes six specialists in census and survey methodologies, sampling, civil registration, geographical information systems and data processing, act as the substantive officers for the UNFPA-funded projects. The programme officers clear all actions with the focal substantive officer and the Chief of the Technical Cooperation and Management Services.

80. Evaluations of projects for which the Statistics Division is the executing agency are conducted in cooperation with the funding organization and the countries concerned. In September 1996, the Division completed a desk review of all 129 ongoing national statistical projects. The review assessed 15 of the

projects as active, requiring substantive and/or managerial support, 15 projects as requiring minimal substantive support and 99 as recently completed or transferred to the Governments but not yet formally closed by the Department for Development Support and Management Services. The Department will effect financial completion after closure of the 1996 accounts. On the basis of that review, the Division adopted a selective and focused approach to its participation in the execution of statistical field projects. The Division concluded that in future it would (a) only undertake projects in areas where the need for the analytical and technical capacity of the Division was apparent; (b) support and encourage greater involvement of the regional commissions; (c) assign higher priority to projects that emphasized training and short-term technical assistance; and (d) participate in implementing statistical projects only when projects were of significant international or methodological interest or where staff exposure through participation in project activities was seen as a learning opportunity.

81. The regional commissions' technical cooperation activities in statistics consist of advisory and training services and support field operations projects. During 1994-1995, advisory and training services accounted for two thirds of the work/months of such activities. About 40 per cent of the staff work months utilized in operational activities were from extrabudgetary resources. Only two commissions had operational activities in the field. Both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources were used for all three types of activity. ECE provided advisory services in economic statistics and is also implementing projects on social and demographic statistics and small-scale electronic data-processing projects for countries with economies in transition.

H. Utilization of staff resources

82. As shown in table 4, the distribution of the programme's activities and resources, measured by the proportion of Professional staff time, is heavily concentrated on the production of recurrent publications. In the central programme, publications account for more than 50 per cent of the total Professional effort other than technical assistance. In reality the proportion of resources allocated to publications is significantly higher, since most of the General Service staff (66 of the 135 staff) are largely engaged in the processing of the statistical data used in the production of the recurrent publications.

83. The share of publications in Professional work/months is similar in the central and regional programmes. Within the regional commissions, the share of publications in staff work/months during 1994-1995 ranged from 31 per cent (ESCAP) to 79 per cent (ECLAC); the work/months were equally distributed between recurrent and non-recurrent publications. In ECE, most of the work/months in publications included statistical work for the Economic Survey of Europe and the Economic Bulletin for Europe.

Table 4. Actual utilization of Professional work/months in the statistics programme, 1994-1995

Major categories of outputs and services	Statistics Division		Regional commissions	
	Professional work/month (RB + XB)	Percentage	Professional work/months (RB + XB)	Percentage
Methodological activity	289	24.8	[a]	[a]
Parliamentary services	97	8.3	140	19.7
Data processing	176	15.1	196	27.6
Customized services to users	[a]	[a]	[a]	[a]
Publications	605	51.8	374	52.2
Total	1 167	100.0	710	100.0
Memorandum item				
Technical cooperation				
Regular budget	244	59.0	266.7	53.6
Extrabudgetary	169	41.0	230.8	46.4
Total	413	100.0	497.5	100.0

Source: Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit, Office of Internal Oversight Services.

[a] Not identified separately.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

84. The statistics programme illustrates the type of activity the United Nations does well. The intergovernmental oversight bodies are broadly drawn from national statistical offices; this brings to bear on the programme both professional expertise and sensitivity to the full range of situations and policy concerns throughout the world at the national and regional levels. The programme acts effectively as the centre of a world statistical system at a very modest cost. It is a vehicle for international agreement on methodological issues guiding world rounds of censuses and the development of comparable economic and social statistical series. The Administrative Committee on Coordination's coordination processes work effectively to determine division of labour among the organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations concerned with statistics. The secretariat divisions dealing with statistics not only conduct their own work with professional competence but also provide professionally solid support to international deliberations and secretariat activity in other economic and social programmes.

85. The Statistics Division of the Secretariat is called upon to provide leadership in the coordination of international statistical activities and in the compilation, analysis and dissemination of relevant and timely international statistics. Technological change in information storage, retrieval and dissemination has, however, added possibilities to reach users with new services. At present, the efforts and skill mix of the staff in the statistical programme are heavily weighted in favour of the compilation and processing of statistics for use in statistical publications. These are, however, as shown in

chapter II above and summarized in the appendix, the most problematic outputs of the programme because, in contrast to its other outputs and services, there is very little knowledge available on the users and utilization of publications. The Statistical Commission's deliberations, on the other hand, focus on international standards and the development of methodologies for environmental and socio-economic statistics pertinent to the concerns of recent conferences.

86. A strategy is needed to make a shift in allocations, over the four-year period of the medium-term plan, to a focus on services determined by user needs and a knowledge of utilization patterns. The strategy should also make the complementarity and coordination of regional and central programmes more transparent.

87. The Office of Internal Oversight Services makes the following recommendations as regards the future work of the statistics programme.

(a) Transition from focus on publications to focus on customized services

Recommendation 1. User needs and the development of UNESIS.

The Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis should seek the views of representatives of the main user groups on their needs and utilize that information in the design of UNESIS.

Recommendation 2. On-line access to United Nations statistical databases.

(a) It should be the general policy of the United Nations that statistical data and associated analysis is to be made available free of charge on-line, with exceptions only to protect significant commercial value or confidentiality;

(b) The Statistics Division and the Department of Public Information should explore the feasibility of establishing on-line access to UNESIS databases at regional statistical institutes and United Nations information centres.

Recommendation 3. Tracking and responding to needs of users.

The statistics divisions in the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the regional commissions should actively seek to determine existing and potential demand for their services through such means as focus groups of users; analysis of utilization patterns of on-line users; surveys of national statistical offices; and surveys of organizations requesting customized services.

Recommendation 4. Improvement in regional information systems.

The Information Technology Services Division, Department of Administration and Management, should assist the Statistics Division and the regional commissions in the development of compatible standards for information technology systems.

(b) Publications

Recommendation 5. Statistical publications policy.

Statistical publications of the United Nations should consist of:

(a) Publications that are issued as sales publications as a matter of record or for other non-commercial reasons in appropriate small print runs. The same information can be issued additionally in mimeograph or similar inexpensive print or machine-readable forms. There should be no embargo on free distribution of the same information on-line;

(b) Publications that are of commercial significance, and which are financed, produced, advertised and sold so as to maximize sales revenue, with on-line information made available in a manner that protects the United Nations commercial interest in those publications.

Sales publications with a market demand that is not commercially viable and for which the United Nations does not have a strong non-commercial interest in continued publication should be discontinued. The information in them should be made available on-line or in machine-readable products.

Recommendation 6. Evaluation of publications.

All United Nations statistical publications should be subject to reviews similar to those described in paragraph 70.

(c) Coordination of the programme and services

Recommendation 7. Integrated presentation.

The Statistics Division, in cooperation with the Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination should prepare an experimental integrated presentation in order to identify opportunities for joint activities and collaboration in areas of common concern. A report on this experiment should be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission.

Recommendation 8. Analytical services to Departments.

In environmental statistics, the Statistics Division has already established a joint task force with the Division for Sustainable Development for the development of policy-oriented indicators. Similar arrangements should be established with other units of the Secretariat and the specialized agencies with reporting responsibilities for the refinement and compilation of internationally comparable socio-economic indicators.

Recommendation 9. Dissemination of innovations and lessons learned.

The experiences of the regional commissions, such as those described in paragraphs 59 and 60 above, should be systematically reviewed for possible

wider adoption. The regional commissions should establish regular joint symposiums on their experiences.

Recommendation 10.

The present report, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on it, should be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission.

(Signed) Karl Th. PASCHKE
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/49/16), part one, para. 34.

[2] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/45/6/Rev.1), para. 24.4.

[3] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6 (E/1993/26), paras. 32 (c), 33 (c) and 40 (b).

[4] See Report of the Conference of European Statisticians on its thirty-ninth plenary session (ECE/CES/38), annex II.

[5] Report of the Committee on Statistics on its ninth session (E/ESCAP/995), paras. 30-32.

[6] For a description of the work of the task forces, see Report of the ACC Subcommittee on International Statistics on its twenty-ninth session (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.12), pp. 6-9.

[7] Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its eighteenth session (E/CN.3/1997/19), para. 20 (d).

[8] For the latest integrated presentation, see the documents on the subject of the Conference of European Statisticians at its forty-fourth plenary session (CES/1996/R.30 and Add.1-6).

[9] See the note by the ESCAP secretariat on the experimental presentation of work programmes of ESCAP and the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific, 1994-1995 (E/ESCAP/STAT.9/19).

[10] Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirtieth session (ACC/1996/9), para. 9.

[11] The recommendations also explicitly mentioned the need to consider the relationship between census topics and specific uses of census data such as the minimum national social data set.

[12] Half of the 16 countries represented at the meeting of the Expert Group on the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme were from developing regions, with some 2 or 3 countries represented from each region.

[13] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6 (E/1993/26), para. 36.

[14] Ibid., para. 21.

[15] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 67 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.XVII.8).

[16] Ibid., No. 52, Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.XVII.14).

[17] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 9 (E/1994/29), para. 51 (g), and ibid., 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 12 (a).

[18] See the note by the Statistics Division on the review of the debt-burden adjustment used in the assessment scale methodology (A/CN.2/R.607).

[19] See the annexes to Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/50/11) and the note by the Statistics Division on national income (A/CN.2/R.578/Add.1) which contains data issued every three years.

[20] See the note by the Statistics Division on further work on the use and application of conversion factors in the assessment scale methodology (A/CN.2/R.608).

[21] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/48/6/Rev.1), para. 9.7.

[22] See the report on work accomplished during the period 1994-1995 (E/ESCWA/STAT/1995/IG.1/7), para. 19.

[23] See Report of the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4), annex, para. 2.

[24] Ibid., para. 8: the five policy themes are population and development, eradication of poverty, expansion of productive employment and reduction of unemployment, social integration and status of women and men.

[25] See Report of the Expert Group ... (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4), annex, paras. 100-102.

[26] Ibid., para. 45, and the note by the Secretary-General on the work of the inter-agency task forces (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3), para. 18 (d).

[27] Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its eighteenth session (E/CN.3/1997/19), paras. 29 (a) and (b) and 31 (e).

[28] ibid., para. 3 (d).

[29] E/ECE/1347.

[30] List of depository libraries receiving United Nations publications (ST/LIB/12/Rev.13).

[31] See the paper submitted by the Bureau of the Conference on the first draft evaluation of the utility and impact of the various ECE statistical publications (CES/747), para. 5.

[32] ibid., para. 6.

[33] (CES/747), para. 12.

[34] Note prepared by the Secretariat on the review of ECE statistical publications (ECE/CES/46), paras. 5 and 6.

[35] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1983, Supplement No. 2 (E/1983/12 and Corr.1), para. 19.

[36] E/CN.3/1985/4.

[37] E/CN.3/1985/2.

[38] E/CN.3/1991/3.

APPENDIX

The statistics programme: users and utilization

Outputs and surveys	Is the identity of the primary users clear?	Do production decisions take into account users' needs?	Is feedback on use feasible; regularly collected? How?	Utilization
1. International methodological recommendations (technical reports, guidelines, handbooks and manuals)	Yes: national statistical offices and organizations of the United Nations system.	Yes: an elaborate process of consultation and review exists.	Yes; questionnaires to Governments and organizations of United Nations system; analysis of national reporting practices.	The extent of compliance in reporting practices is known and often high.
2. Parliamentary services (reports; substantive servicing of meetings)	Yes: Statistical Commission members and other delegations, and regional statistic committees.	Yes: by request of the Statistical Commission and review by its Working Group, and requests from regional statistical committees.	Yes.	Clear from discussion in and decisions of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group and regional statistical committees.
3. On-line access to databases	Yes.	No, but users can manipulate data. National statistical offices were surveyed on content prior to putting the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics on-line.	Yes; users are required to register; user responses and characteristics of users who registered have been analysed from registration information.	Potentially large; with more equitable access than other dissemination methods.
4. Customized services to users				
(a) Customized extracts from databases;	Yes.	Yes.	Yes; statistics on requests have been collected, but no surveys of needs or potential users.	Value to user clear, since output is requested.
(b) Follow-up to major conferences and other analytical customized services.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes; no survey of potential users of customized analytical services.	Value to user clear; extensive assistance is given.

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Outputs and surveys	Is the identity of the primary users clear?	Do production decisions take into account users' needs?	Is feedback on use feasible; regularly collected? How?	Utilization
5. Publications (print and machine-readable products)	Little reliable information available at reasonable cost on the identities and needs of primary users, who are diverse and reached through libraries and other intermediaries.	No; little use is made of groups of representative users; surveys would be possible at reasonable cost for publications sold by subscription only.	Expensive and problematical; some surveys have been attempted, but not proper sample surveys, which would be very expensive; sales and citations in the professional literature and in news reports have not been monitored or assessed systematically.	No clear picture is available or possible at reasonable cost.
6. Technical cooperation	Yes: requesting Government.	Yes.	Project evaluations are conducted as required by donor agencies.	Results of donor evaluations are made available to Governments.